

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)



January 26, 2020

Editor's Note: As the new administration takes office, we hope to see a speedy end to the suffering brought about by the pandemic and the economic crisis which are wreaking havoc on millions of lives. Distrust of our political leaders remains high and partisan politics remain entrenched. Independent Voting continues our work to redress political divisions and the rules of the partisan power game which fuel them. Independents believe we need a new kind of political culture. We look forward to working together to create it. – Gwen Mandell

Cry, the Beloved Country

Commentary by Jacqueline Salit

" **Cry, the Beloved Country** " was written by Independent Voting President Jackie Salit (left) after the events of January 6, sharing her view on



democracy, dissent and the difficulty of knowing what things "really" are.

The article was originally published in edited form in *The Fulcrum* . The full-length piece can be viewed [here in Nebraska's Hastings Tribune](#) .

Saving the Soul of America

On the eve of Inauguration Day, a group of faith leaders gathered in Washington, D.C. and virtually to advocate for healing and reconciliation.



Rev. Marshall Hatch, Ira J. Acree, Cy Fields, Gregory Seal Livingston of The Leaders Network and other faith leaders from across the country (outside the Washington National Cathedral in Northwest DC) featured in this report from Washington, DC ABC affiliate WJLA. ([Click here or the photo above to view](#)).

Independent leaders David Cherry of Chicago and Rev. Carl McCluster of Connecticut were among the organizers of this Saving the Soul of America campaign, which was initiated by Rev. Marshall Hatch and Dwight McKee.

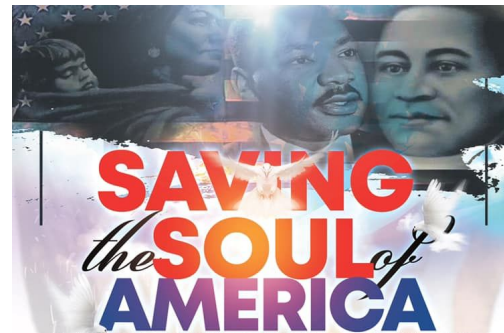
Said Cherry, President of the Leaders Network of Chicago and a national board member of Independent Voting:

"I am proud to stand with these faith leaders who are on the front lines for social justice in communities across our country. We stand together in our nation's capital for democracy, liberty and justice for all at this critical moment in America's history."

Added Rev. McCluster, Senior Pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut: "In this moment of history we will determine, by our responses, whether we will stand on the brink of disaster or the bridge of destiny that leads us out of the valley of partisan politics, racial and social injustice and systemic inequality."

Jackie Salit, President of Independent Voting, contributed the following statement in support of the Saving the Soul of America campaign:

"A soul is a difficult thing to save. Once on a wayward path, it is hard for a person to come to a righteous one. Healing must be earned, the path to redemption must be found.



The Soul of a Nation is even more difficult to save. When a nation loses its way, it must find a way to unite millions upon millions to join together to recreate itself. To rediscover its soul.

America's fledgling movement of independents -- the 41% who refuse to embrace a party label -- is a political movement, not a religious or faith-based movement. But it is made up of millions of diverse Americans who fear that partisanship and demonization have eaten away at our soul.

We seek a rebirth of brotherhood and humanism, of fairness and freedom, of prosperity and a good life for all.

On behalf of Independent Voting, where I am proud to serve as President, we send greetings to Rev. Carl McCluster, to David Cherry and the Leaders Network in Chicago, and to all those who have joined this crucial effort. Best wishes for great success, please know you can count on our support. "

The Next Great Migration: The Rise of Independent Voters

The Open Primaries Education Fund capped off 2020 with a seminal report on how best to structure our political process. The report focuses on the rise of independent voters and the second-class status afforded to those who choose not to enroll in a political party.

[Read or download the report here .](#)



Statewide Bills Threaten Independents' Voter Rights



New Hampshire

A hearing on **HB86** -- a bill that seeks to close same-day voter registration, would require that New Hampshire college students be eligible for in-state tuition in order to vote, and ***requires that voters***

register with a party 30 days before the primaries in order to be eligible to vote in that party's primary -- was held on Friday. Tiani Coleman, President of New Hampshire Voters, fired back by bringing together a grouping of reform organizations to oppose the bill. Independent Voting, Open Primaries, The People and UNITE America have joined with Coleman to reach New Hampshire voters about the proposed bill. On Friday, **Coleman** and **Cathy Stewart**, Vice President for National Development of Independent Voting, delivered testimony to the House Election Law Committee.



Tiani Coleman gives testimony to the House Election Law Committee.

Independent voters account for more than 40% of the voting population in New Hampshire -- more than either the Republican and Democratic parties count as members. The state has a long tradition of allowing independent (undeclared) voters to choose the ballot of their choice in primary elections and re-register as undeclared as soon as they've finished voting.

After the hearing, Coleman said: "I felt so hopeful and invigorated to hear so many independent voters in New Hampshire speak up to express how much they value their ability to vote in primary elections without having to register with a party in advance. While it seems that a few committee members appeared interested in favoring the bill, it was made abundantly clear that HB 86 would not be a popular move, and that it would disenfranchise a large number of voters."

Kansas

Kansans Demand Better is taking issue with legislators' attempts to exclude independents (29% of the electorate), from voting on the Value Them Both amendment by putting the measure on the primary, rather than general election, ballot. Commented Elaine Stephen, a leader of the effort: "The Kansas Constitution requires that an amendment to the state constitution be approved by two-thirds of state legislators and then put before 'the electors.' The



Kansas Constitution doesn't say some of the electors or certain types of electors but rather 'the electors' as a whole, so constitutional amendments should be put on *general* election ballots where all Kansas voters can have an equal say."

Elaine Stephen

Read their statement which appeared in *The Wichita Eagle* and was reprinted by the *Independent Voter Network* .

Coalition Efforts Begin In New Jersey to Fight for Open Primaries and Ranked Choice Voting

Following is a report from Sue Davies, founder of New Jersey Independent Voters, to The Hub:

New Jersey Independent Voters (NJIV) has joined a coalition of electoral reform organizations around the state to organize and advocate for a bill that would establish open primaries and ranked choice voting in the Garden State. The coalition includes members of NJIV, Represent.Us, American Promise, No Labels, and other groups. These reforms would completely transform the electoral landscape in the state.



Sue Davies

Despite comprising nearly 40% (2.4 million) of all New Jersey voters, independents in New Jersey are required to join a party in order to vote in the primaries. Most races are decided in the primaries.

At the invitation of NJIV's Sue Davies, Open Primaries Senior Vice-President Jeremy Gruber recently addressed 60 attendees at a Represent.Us monthly meeting about the positive impact of open primaries, leading to a lively discussion. Also representing the NJIV team were Javier Luque, Mary Johnson, Julie Nersesian, Barb Patrizzi, Dick DeLuca and Rebecca Feldman.

If you are interested in getting more involved, contact Sue Davies at njindependentvoters@gmail.com .

Politics for the People Conversation: In the Balance of Power

The *Politics for the People Book Club* , hosted by Independent Voting's Vice

President for National Development, Cathy Stewart, is reading Dr. Omar H. Ali's groundbreaking study which reveals the multiple independent political strategies and tactics that African Americans have used to expand democracy and to fight for civil and political rights since the founding of the nation.

Originally published in 2008, this new edition of Ali's book includes an epilogue by independent political analyst and Independent Voting President Jacqueline Salit. New chapters address the presidencies of both Barack Obama and Donald Trump, as well as the rising tide of independent and anti-party sentiments.

Omar H. Ali is dean of Lloyd International Honors College and professor of global and comparative African diaspora history at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. A graduate of the London School of Economics, he received his Ph.D. in history from Columbia University and was named the Carnegie Foundation North Carolina professor of the year.

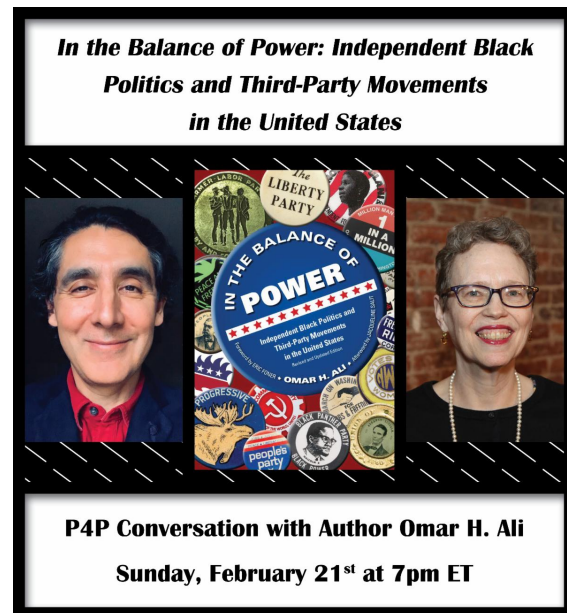
Check out [this interview](#) by Zoë Bossiere of the Ohio University Press with Ali about the book. Follow the [Politics for the People Blog](#) and join Stewart and book club members for a zoom conversation with Ali on Sunday, February 21 at 7pm Eastern Time. [RSVP for the event here](#).

Announcing Spokesperson Training

Are you looking to talk to others about why you're an independent and need some help with your talking points?

Are you interested in educating others about who independents are, but don't know how?

Do you want to learn how to be interviewed by the media about why you chose to be an independent?



Would you like some performance training on how to create a healthy, fun, and growthful political conversation with others?

Independent Voting will be conducting the first of a series of spokesperson trainings this year on **Monday, March 22 from 7-8:30pm ET.**

If you are interested in applying to participate in the first training, email Gwen Mandell at gmandell@independentvoting.org. Spaces are limited.

Please include a paragraph about yourself: Why you are an independent and what you hope to gain from participating.



Profiles in Independence

Susan Sommers • Weston, Vermont

The two-party system is destroying our democracy. Independents are essential to saving it.

In 2012, I ran for Wisconsin State Senate as a Democrat at the urging of supporters. Our campaign prevailed in the primary, which mystified the Democratic Party machine. We lost in the general election. I wanted to run as an independent but felt our campaign would not get the backing it needed. If I run for office again, I hope I have the steadfastness to run as an Independent.



Susan Sommers

I was a Prosecuting Attorney in the State of Wisconsin for more than 17 years. In 2004, I became an AmeriCorps Member and worked construction with a Habitat for Humanity affiliate in South Carolina. In 2008, my husband (whom I met and married through my work with Habitat) and I moved home to Northern Wisconsin. Finding fulfilling employment was difficult, and we missed our Habitat work. Finally in 2015,

we moved to Vermont so I could take a position as Executive Director with Bennington County Habitat for Humanity.

Our democracy is at risk. I have been unsettled trying to discern how I can help save it. My research began in earnest after November 3 and was pushed into overdrive after the breach of the US Capitol on January 6. We have much work to do – together.

In the News

Read " **Open Primaries, Long Overdue in New York** ," an editorial by Open Primaries' President John Opdycke and Senior Vice President Jeremy Gruber. (*Albany Times Union*)

Read " **Maine Voices: Use New Glue to Repair Our Democracy** , by Joe Pickering, co-founder of Mainers for Fair Elections. (*Portland Press-Herald*)

Steve Richardson, President of Virginia Independent Voters Association, offered his view, " **What Is Wrong with Us** ." He says: The way out of this mess is not to bring "both sides" together but rather to get rid of the sides. (*The Medium*)

Western Colorado Independent Voters' Randy Fricke's Letter to the Editor " **Two Selfish Parties** " was printed in a number of publications. (*Aspen Daily News*)

Read Bridge Michigan's report " **Michigan Is Divided. These 7 Reforms Can Curb Partisanship and Fix Government** ." (*Bridge Michigan*)

Gwen Mandell
Director of National Outreach
IndependentVoting.org
800-288-3201

Give us a call today!

gmandell@independentvoting.org

